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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KINSHASA 000378

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PREF MOPS CG

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH EUGENE SERUFULI:  
RWANDOPHONIE; IDP RETURNS, AND INDIANS IN MONUC

REF: KINSHASA 33

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Garvelink for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) During an April 14 meeting with Ambassador, Eugene Serufuli, former RCD Governor of North Kivu, clearly advocated for a decoupage of North Kivu into a Rwandophone-dominated Petit Nord and a Nande-dominated Grand Nord. He cautioned against viewing ethnic relations in Eastern DRC through the prism of Hutu-Tutsi relations in Rwanda, noting that Hutus and Tutsis have historically been allies in the Kivus to protect their interests vis-a-vis other ethnic groups. The FARDC, in Serufuli's opinion, would not need RDF support for Kimia II operations in South Kivu. Serufuli called for Congolese IDPs in North Kivu to go home. He claimed that most of North Kivu was now safe enough for returns and he criticized NGOs for having a vested interest in not encouraging IDPs to return home. Ambassador responded that, while we also supported IDP returns, the security situation in many areas was still precarious. Responding to a question about possible Indian withdrawal from MONUC, Serufuli acknowledged that it was in no one's interest to provoke the withdrawal. He maintained that the problem stemmed primarily from FARDC organizational weaknesses. End Summary.

The Situation in the East

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¶2. (C) Ambassador, DCM, and Polcouns met April 14 with Eugene Serufuli Ngayabaseka, President of the Congolese National Electric Company (SNEL) and former RCD Governor of North Kivu. Serufuli acknowledged that there had been persistent mistrust of Rwandan intentions within the GDRC, including by President Kabila himself. However, Kabila, according to Serufuli, is now resolute in maintaining the positive momentum between the two countries. Now, both governments need to reinforce diplomatic and commercial progress.

¶3. (C) Responding to Ambassador's question whether Rwandan forces would be invited to participate in Kimia II operations against the FDLR in South Kivu, Serufuli said the FARDC, with MONUC support, could carry out the operations against "a weakened FDLR" without RDF support. Rwandan involvement had been necessary in the North Kivu operations to "neutralize the CNDP." Without joint FARDC-RDF action, Serufuli expressed doubt as to whether the majority of the CNDP forces would have supported the operations.

¶4. (C) Turning to the question of increasing influence by Rwandophonie elements in North Kivu, Serufuli claimed that discussion of decoupage -- administratively separating the Grand Nord from the Petit Nord -- had arisen in response to Nande discrimination against Hutus and Tutsis in the province. Ideally, Serufuli posited, authorities should ensure conciliation efforts, but, in reality, they have not succeeded. Serufuli added that each side should therefore maintain political control of the areas in which it has a majority: Nande in the Grand Nord and Rwandophones in the Petit Nord. Serufuli said that, although a division of North Kivu was not part of the GDRC's decentralization process, it could be achieved by simply passing a new law.

¶5. (C) Serufuli flatly said that the Nande, in his opinion, wanted to maintain near-complete control of North Kivu. Nande leaders are only satisfied if they control the reins of power in Goma, Serufuli added. Serufuli maintained that many Nande, such as those in Rutshuru, were comfortable in a multi-ethnic Petit Nord. Unfortunately, Nande from the Beni and Butembo areas discriminated against these ethnic kin.

¶6. (C) Serufuli cautioned against viewing Congolese ethnic dynamics, particularly Hutu-Tutsi relations, through the prism of Rwanda's ethnic politics. According to Serufuli, ethnic relations in Rwanda (and to some extent in Burundi) were perceived as a zero-sum game: either you were in power

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or you were on the outside. Acknowledging that there were some extremist Congolese Hutus and Tutsis, Serufuli maintained that the overwhelming majority from these groups, which are both small minorities in the overall DRC context, understood that they had to cooperate to ensure their political interests vis-a-vis other ethnic groups, i.e., the Nande.

Encouraging IDP Returns

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¶7. (C) Serufuli thanked the USG for its humanitarian and diplomatic assistance in working towards stabilizing the Eastern DRC. Particularly in November 2008, when the security and humanitarian situations were precarious, senior levels at the Embassy had been active. Now, in Serufuli's opinion, more needed to be done to encourage IDPs to return home in North Kivu, given improving security. There were approximately 100,000 IDPs around Goma who should go home, in Serufuli's opinion. Serufuli said he had traveled to the region several times in an effort to facilitate IDP returns, claiming that his efforts had already resulted in the return of approximately 30,000 IDPs. Noting that land tenure issues had been problematic even before the conflict in the East erupted, Serufuli said this should not slow down efforts to achieve IDP returns and, eventually, return of Congolese refugees from neighboring countries.

¶8. (C) Serufuli lamented that many NGOs simply preferred to keep IDPs in their camps, with the idea of "no camp, no job." Thanks to the recent operations against the FDLR, there were many areas of North Kivu to which it was safe for IDPs to return.

¶9. (C) To accomplish this, the GDRC was asking donors to help bilaterally, but also through re-energizing DRC-Rwandan-UNHCR and DRC-Ugandan-UNHCR tripartite discussions. This effort required additional funding, as well as a stepped-up sensitization campaign. MONUC could help with logistics, but its mandate did not include IDP/refugee issues, except for civilian protection actions.

¶10. (C) Ambassador responded that the USG also supported IDP

returns, but only if the security situation was stable. Unfortunately, on-going insecurity in some parts of the Kivus posed problems for IDP returns, as well as for NGOs working in the area. Ambassador noted that, while some NGOs might be overly cautious, the larger, more established NGOs recognize that IDPs should return home when the situation improves. Ambassador recommended first convincing the UNHCR that the situation had improved, as many NGOs will look to the UN agency for guidance on IDP returns. Ambassador highlighted on-going USG humanitarian assistance to Eastern DRC, pointing to the more than \$100 million in aid that we provided in 2008.

Indians in MONUC

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111. (C) Ambassador raised the possibility that India would withdraw all its troops and assets from MONUC, emphasizing that Indian support was absolutely vital for MONUC's ability to help stabilize Eastern DRC. Serufuli admitted that an Indian withdrawal would be detrimental to all. Serufuli portrayed the threatened Indian withdrawal as an organizational problem within a badly structured and poorly run FARDC. Some senior level FARDC and GDRC officials have developed a certain mistrust towards the Indian contingent, based on real or perceived slights. Serufuli said that in order for the situation to improve, it would be necessary to restore the local population's confidence in MONUC, which has often served as a scapegoat for FARDC/GDRC ineffectiveness. Ambassador agreed, but added that there must also be a will at the political level to resolve the impasse.

Comment

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112. (C) Congo observers are well aware that Serufuli has been on a campaign to reassert Rwandophone domination in North Kivu for several months (reftel), perhaps through a formal decoupage process or perhaps through more informal, backroom political pressure. What is also clear is that Serufuli would not undertake this campaign without backing

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from the Presidency. While Embassy Kigali is in a better position to comment on Rwandan intentions, the creation of a Rwandophone-dominated North Kivu provincial government could serve both Kigali's and Kinshasa's interests. The big question, of course, is how the "losers" in such a power play would react. Several prominent Nande have recently lost their positions or their positions are under threat: former Foreign Minister Mbusa was dismissed in October; North Kivu Governor Paluku is allegedly under significant pressure from Kinshasa to resign; and even the well respected head of the Amani Process and President of the National Electoral Commission Father Malu Malu has reportedly come under some criticism. In South Kivu, which would not be affected by any decoupage process, some argue that senior Bashi are being sidelined, most notably, Vital Kamerhe. Serufuli's observations about the IDP situation bear close monitoring; while his premise about improving security in North Kivu is correct, we certainly do not want to facilitate the premature return of IDPs to areas that are not suitably safe. End

Comment.  
GARVELINK